FEATURES
From Where I Sit
Oliveira '26 takes us through life at Hamilton as an international student from Brazil. **page 5**

NEWS
A.I. Alumni Panel
Alumni in media, including Paul Lieberstein '89, discuss A.I. in the entertainment industry. **page 3**

A&E
Upcoming Albums in 2023
Bratter '25 offers a rundown on notable albums soon to be released. **page 9**

The Spectator

Thursday, October 19, 2023

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Number V

Publishing the Truth, From Good Motives and For Justifiable Ends

President Wippman releases a statement after Hamas's terrorist attacks in Israel

by William Rampe '24
OPINION EDITOR

President Wippman released a statement regarding the ongoing war between Israel and the Gaza-based terrorist group Hamas last Wednesday. "The recent terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel serve as a gruesome reminder to all of us that intentionally targeting civilians is abhorrent and criminal," said Wippman in a press release emailed from his office. "Understandably, many in our community are experiencing feelings of anger, grief, sadness, and anxiety. I share their dismay."

The Oct. 7 terrorist attacks by Hamas caused the deaths of over 1,300 Israelis, leading to an Israeli Defense Force response that has led to the deaths of over 2,000 Palestinians, a number that will climb as analysts anticipate an Israeli ground offensive into the heavily populated north of Gaza. "Occupying–or, more precisely, re-occupying–Gaza would be a nightmare," explained Richard Haass, president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations, in a piece for Project Syndicate. "There are few, if any, military undertakings more difficult than urban warfare, and Gaza is one of the most densely populated urban environments in the world."

Wippman's statement comes amid controversy over how colleges and universities should respond to the conflict. Previously, Sean Bennett, vice president of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, released a statement calling for members of the Hamilton community "to share both love and light with communities who may need support."

As administrators take a sympathetic stance to the differences of opinions surrounding the conflict, student groups have taken stronger stances. "We stand in solidarity with Israel and condemn unequivocally this terrorist attack on innocent civilians," reads a joint message from Hamilton College Hillel and Chabad Student Group in support of Israel. "As Jews, we hold all lives sacred and denounce this violence perpetrated by Hamas against Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike."

Notably, Harvard University has come under scrutiny for the response of Harvard's Palestine Solidarity Groups, which released a statement holding "the Israeli regime entirely responsible for all unfolding violence." "The coming days will require a firm stand against colonial retaliation," continued the statement. "We call on the Harvard community to take action to stop the ongoing annihilation of Palestinians." The nationwide outrage over these students' anti-Israel stance led Harvard University President Claudine Gay to release a statement clarifying that "no student group—not even 30 student groups—speaks for Harvard University or its leadership." "We will all be well served in such a difficult moment by rhetoric that aims to illuminate and not inflame," wrote Gay. "And I appeal to all of us in this community of learning to keep this in mind as our conversations continue."

However, this response has not calmed Harvard's critics. "In nearly 50 years of Harvard affiliation, I have never been as disillusioned and alienated as I am today," wrote former Harvard President Lawrence Summers in an Oct. 9 post on X. This criticism has even led to a loss of funding, with the Wexner Foundation, a Jewish philanthropic organization, deciding to cut ties with Harvard while calling Harvard's response a "dismal failure."

Given the controversy regarding how colleges and universities should respond to the Israel-Hamas conflict, Wippman's statement allows Hamilton's administration to avoid the criticism about a lack of response while avoiding alienating students who hold differing perspectives. "Not everyone agrees that universities have a duty to take a public stance on global conflicts, crises and disasters—even though many institutions have made it a practice to do so in recent years," notes Johanna Alonso for Inside Higher Ed. "And as some of Harvard's critics noted, that precedent made the administration's initial silence especially galling."

PHOTO COURTESY OF HATEM MOUSSA/ AP

On Oct. 7, Hamas launched an attack on Israel, resulting in the highest number of Jewish deaths on a single day since the Holocaust.

No matter one's perspective on whether colleges and universities have a duty to share their own views on hot-button geopolitical issues, statements such as Wippman's are becoming more common.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAMILTON COLLEGE

Wippman has released other statements on political issues, like the death of George Floyd and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*.

October 19, 2023

Concerns arise over campus master plans

by Erin Delaney '26
STAFF WRITER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NICOLE GREENBERG '25

The Days-Massolo Center (top), Afro-Latin Cultural Center and Africana Studies Department (left) and the Philosophy Department (right) buildings line College Hill Road. Some community members expressed frustration that the proposed master plan removes these buildings.

Hamilton is currently engaged in a campus master planning process in partnership with an interdisciplinary team of designers from Boston-based architecture and design firm Sasaki. According to an email from Facilities Management, "the objective of this process is to create an insightful, visionary roadmap to enhance our physical campus for decades to come," Sasaki held an Open House in the Tolles Pavilion on Thurs., Oct. 5th to allow students, faculty and staff to meet the team and provide feedback on the direction of the campus master plan.

The new residential strategy aims to consolidate students on the Hill by de-densifying traditional residence halls and introducing a range of community spaces. There would be a 150-bed semi-suite style residence hall south of Commons and a 200-bed apartment style housing facility south of Bristol. Bundy East and West would be converted into 72 student apartment beds.

Sasaki hopes to create a thriving center of campus along Martin's Way. The firm plans to develop a Community Life Hub featuring formal and informal student gathering spaces, a student center, multicultural center and a space for Spiritual and Religious Life. A new Dining Commons would centralize dining and replace the two respective ones on light and dark sides, and would include meeting rooms, a new mail center, catering, late-night dining options and a faculty dining room.

Pedestrianizing the Main Quad and West Quad by removing general vehicular access would create an inclusive pedestrian-oriented public realm. Sasaki plans to construct two new outdoor programming areas west of Blood Fitness Center and east of Dunham and implement Glen Links and Loop Trail.

The ALEX Program would expand into a Learning Commons that consolidates the Advising and Experience elements of ALEX, the Career Center, the Registrar's Office and informal study space. Buttrick Hall would be renovated to accommodate the Learn elements of ALEX.

The proposed changes to athletics strive to develop a connected athletics and recreation district on campus. The Stadium Concourse building would be built between Love Field and Steuben Field for football, lacrosse and track. Sage Rink would be enhanced with a connective atrium that links the Alumni Gym, Sage Rink and the Field House.

Other opportunities for impact include introducing facilities to enhance the employee experience at Hamilton. The Griffin Road Apartments, 4002 Campus Road and 1 Anderson Road would turn into staff housing.

Dorothy MacAusland, Associate Planner at Sasaki, reports that student input thus far has been mostly positive. After Sasaki met with the Student Assembly to present their ideas, she said "students were pretty energized about the idea of transforming the residential experience." However, they did receive some concerns about the location of the centralized dining hall, as it would require the removal of the Days-Massolo Center, ALCC and Philosophy House. Regarding those concerns, MacAusland said that Sasaki "understands that there's a lot of history that students are concerned about losing. Students feel really connected to the spaces, particularly students that use them regularly."

Peter Cannavò, Professor and Chair of Government, voiced his concerns about the consolidation of the Days-Massolo Center, ALCC and Philosophy House. "I do worry about tearing down small buildings like the DMC, which is really a home for the students who use it as a real safe space", he said. "And I think consolidating that within some campus center would lose a lot of what students really value about that." Cannavò feels that based on sketches and models of the renovations provided by Sasaki, there is the potential for losing campus history and character.

Sasaki plans to implement various sustainability and leverage decarbonization practices during the process of this major campus renovation. These plans include switching from fossil fuels to electricity for building systems, developing sustainable design guidelines, renovating existing building systems to reduce energy use and continuing to build solar PV on campus rooftops and parking lot canopies.

Sasaki plans to use feedback from the Hamilton community and a steering committee composed of staff and faculty to refine their ideas and develop a report for December. MacAusland says that the plan is still in its conceptual stage. "None of the projects presented here today are guaranteed. They're all conceptual, and even in December, what ultimately will be proposed are still kind of just a vision or a framework for the campus in the future, and it's flexible."

October 19, 2023

Paul Lieberstein talks A.I. on alumni panel

by Catherine Vogt '24
STAFF WRITER

Hamilton alumni Paul Lieberstein '89, Keith Stichweh '92, Mark Mullett '05, and John Hadity '83 gathered over Zoom to discuss the future of media entertainment on Oct. 17. There were 74 attendees over Zoom and 19 viewers in the Sadove Conference Room.

John Hadity began the discussion by summarizing what prompted the Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA strike: a lack of residuals and AI. The Executive Vice President of the Incentives Group at Entertainment Partners explained that if an actor is a union worker on a union project, they are entitled to residuals based on the revenue that is generated on any home entertainment platform. Forms of home entertainment platforms include Netflix, cable, DVDs, and so forth. Simply put, whenever an actor's content is played, the actor is supposed to get a check based on their agreed upon percentage with the production team. However, Hadity noted that streaming platforms are not required to report how many people are watching each particular show or movie, leading actors to not get their well-deserved residuals. Hadity also discussed how the prevalence of artificial intelligence (AI) today has prompted the discussion of whether or not writers' rooms and full production teams are necessary. To emphasize the widespread usage of AI, the veteran entertainment executive cited a recent Harrison Ford interview where Ford explained that he worked very few days while filming the latest Indiana Jones movie since most of the scenes were created utilizing AI.

Lieberstein, famously known for his role as Toby Flenderson on "The Office", discussed how, as a writer, it is normal for him to not work for long periods of time. Given the nature of his job, Lieberstein noted that the Writers Guild of America and SAG-AFTRA strikes did not affect him as much as it did for other workers like camera crews who consistently work Mondays through Friday.

The writer and producer of "The Office" and "King of the Hill" made sure to acknowledge how much effort goes into producing TV shows and movies since the writing, editing, and filming processes all occur at the same time. During the peak of "The Office," Lieberstein remembered that there would be twenty writers in a room at once. Now in the age of AI, Lieberstein believes that AI can easily be abused during the writing process. For example, AI can write a draft script and the production team can then bring a writer in to edit that draft. The production team can then pay the editing writer less than if they were to write the script from scratch.

Keith Stichweh, a Vice President of Production Technology at SkyDance Animation, explained how the projects he works on are completely made using computer generated imagery (CGI), such as movies like "Finding Nemo." Stichweh mentioned that CGI encompasses a wide range of technological modifications from photo retouching to explosion scenes. Alongside CGI, animation companies are utilizing AI more frequently, which Stichweh believes we are not adapting quickly enough to.

Mark Mullet, a former agent at Willliam Morris and Creative Artists Agency (CAA), brought up how the usage of AI is getting backlash. In the recent Disney+ movie Prom Pact, Disney created unrealistic AI generated extras, presumably to save money on paying real extras.

Stichweh discussed how because of the recent writers/actors strike, all voice talent, which is necessary for CGI films, have stopped working. As a result, companies like SkyDance animation, have been forced to pause the production of their films, leading to significant layoffs as well.

Campus Safety Incident Report

In an effort to respect discretion, *The Spectator* and Campus Safety have not disclosed the idenities of the students involved in these reports.

Thurs., Oct. 12

12:10 a.m. Fire Alarm—South Residence Hall

10:05 a.m. Parking Complaint—Siuda Lot

7:05 p.m. Area Check—Scott Field House

Fri., Oct. 13

11:59 a.m. Complaint—Dunham Residence Hall

Sat., Oct. 14

1:23 a.m. Medical Emergency—South Campus

6:37 a.m. Assist—North Campus

2:45 p.m. Motorist Assist—North Lot

3:37 p.m. Medical Emergency—Campus Safety Building

11:32 p.m. Fire Alarm—North Campus

11:51 p.m. Noise Complaint—North Campus

Sun., Oct. 15

1:02 a.m. Noise Complaint—North Campus

10:52 a.m. Assist—Ferguson Student Lot

7:10 p.m. Animal Complaint—Bundy West Residence Hall

Mon., Oct. 16

3:49 a.m. Trouble Alarm—Mcewen Dining Hall

5:52 p.m. Assist—Mail Center

7:22 p.m. Medical Emergency—Commons Dining Facility

9:45 p.m. Area Check—Griffin Road

Tues., Oct. 17

4:23 a.m. Trouble Alarm—North Residence Hall

6:23 a.m. Area Check—Taylor Science Center

5:19 p.m. Fire Alarm—Milbank Residence Hall

6:11 p.m. 2% Fire Alarm—Griffin Road Apartments

7:02 p.m. Medical Emergency—Glenview A

Dear Hamilton Community,

The Oct. 7 attack on Israel and the Israeli government's response have consumed the nation and much of the world in critical dialogue centered around a complex conflict. While recent events reveal shocking accounts of violence on a highly concentrated scale, we must also acknowledge the complicated history of this conflict which spans the course of decades in order to responsibly discuss its future as informed citizens, and naturally, as current students. As Hamilton represents a diverse community, we encourage everyone to learn from each other through the kind of open dialogue which defines our campus—one to which we must contribute our ideas in order to meaningfully learn.

It can be isolating to learn about the developing conflict in the bubble of newspaper headlines and social media posts. We encourage you to have real conversations—talk to your friends, peers or faculty about world events. Despite the polarizing nature of this topic, it is important to listen with empathy and share with respect.

Sincerely,
The Spectator

Corrections & Amplifications

Readers can alert *The Spectator* to any errors in articles by emailing spec@hamilton.edu.

The Spectator

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Celebrating 157 years,
we *were first published as* The Hamilton Campus *in 1866.*

The Spectator's Letter to the Editor section is designed to be a forum for the entire Hamilton community to discuss and debate campus, local, national, and global issues. Pieces published in the section express the opinion of the individual writers and are not necessarily the opinions of *The Spectator*, its editors or the Media Board.

Letters to the Editor are welcome from all students, alumni/ae, faculty, friends of the college, and Hamilton community members.

The Spectator has the following policies for submission:

1. Submissions are due by 10:00 p.m. on the Monday before publication. The editors reserve the right to refuse any late submissions.
2. Letters should be no longer than 500 words. The editors reserve the right to cut off letters at 500 words.
3. Letters submitted anonymously will not be printed.
4. *The Spectator* reserves the right not to publish any letter it deems inappropriate for publication.
5. If a piece is determined to be libelous, an unwarranted invasion of privacy, or an unnecessary and/or unwarranted ad hominem or personal attack, it will not be published.

About Us

The Hamilton College Spectator, *publication number USPS 612-840, is published weekly by the Hamilton College Student Media Board while classes are in session. For more information e-mail spec@hamilton.edu. Our offices are located on the second floor of the Sadove Student Center. The deadline for advertisements is Monday the week of publication. For further information, please e-mail specads@hamilton.edu.*

by Vicky Oliveira '26, Brazil
FEATURES CONTRIBUTOR

What have you learned about yourself at Hamilton?

I have learned that I am capable of living a happy and calm life. I feel like the small liberal arts environment was really good for me to destress compared to the turbulent life in a big city.

What surprised you about Hamilton?

I didn't realize beforehand how small Clinton was and how "in the middle of nowhere" Hamilton was located. In fact, I thought Clinton had around 40,000 people instead of 2,000.

What are the differences/similarities between Hamilton/America and back home?

The culture is really different in certain aspects. People are more warm in Brazil and we say hi to people by kissing their cheeks. The food is also different—it is more processed here. However, most things are pretty similar.

What challenges have you faced?

I had a hard time with healthcare. I developed asthma last semester and it was hard for me to deal with it without my parents and without knowing really well how the health system works here. I am grateful for the ISS (International Student Services) for providing a space for teaching more about health insurance. I also struggle everyday when people talk in inches and feet. I struggled a lot in the beginning with writing because I went to a Brazilian school, so I was not used to writing in English.

What do you enjoy about Hamilton? (or not enjoy?)

I like how everyone kind of knows everyone. I know a lot of people do not like this, but I like how intense my friendships become when I am immersed in this environment.

What are some fun facts about yourself?

I love watermelon and boba.

Favorite memory at college so far?

Bonfire with my friends

What do you miss about home?

Food and parties

Any words of advice for fellow students (international or domestic)?

You are in a different country, so if you want to reinvent yourself in any way, this is your time!

PHOTO COURTESY OF VICKY OLIVIERA '26

Vicky Oliveira '26 is a sophomore from São Paulo, Brazil. She enjoys the small Hamiton community, and boba.

Weekly Unsolicited

by Candidus
RESIDENT VOICE OF WISDOM

The "Weekly Unsolicited" features advice that no one asked for, but everyone needs.

1. If you get nauseous or motion-sick in a car, here are some tips you can try:
- Eat right before or have small snacks like nuts or fruit during the drive—try to avoid an empty stomach.
- Do not look down at your phone or a book/magazine. Keep your eyes straight ahead.
- Try eating some ginger candies (they really help). Sour candy is also good.
- Wear a single earplug.
- Bring some peppermint essential oil to smell or chew on peppermint gum.
- Get a rubbing alcohol swab and smell it until the scent goes away. It is a little weird, but there is no harm in trying.

2. Please, please, please clean the lint trap after you use the dryer. I had to clean out actual dried dirt chunks in the lint trap from the previous person who dried their clothes. It is basic courtesy to clean them, and it is also a safety precaution for preventing fires. Lint is literally the leading cause of dryer fires because it is so flammable.
3. When paying for things, use a credit card and not a debit card. If you get a fraudulent charge, the credit card company will be way more likely to get you the money back compared to the bank with your debit account. Credit cards are just better because you build your credit score. Though if you are still using daddy's card, maybe consider opening your own.
4. Start ordering your Halloween costume accessories! If you wait too late, they might not get here on time. I just ordered my costume accessories today!

PHOTO COURTESY OF GAMERANT

October 19, 2023

The Russell Report: *DUSK*

by Russell Armstrong ’27
STAFF WRITER

Now that October is here, I have had the perfect excuse to start shopping around for scary games, which is great because otherwise I would never play them (I hate scary games). After searching around on Steam, I dug up a game that I have been aware of for a while now. *DUSK* is a retro first-person shooter filled with cultists, crazy military scientists and, of course, lots and lots of killing. It stands tall at a 97% positive review rating on *Steam* and an 88% on *Metacritic*, and it was published by New Blood Interactive of *ULTRAKILL* and *Faith: The Unholy Trinity* fame. I played and loved *ULTRAKILL* and figured any shooter pushed by them is at least worth some of my time. The developer, David Szymanski, got his start making short horror games (*Iron Lung* is probably his best-known project; it is currently being adapted into a movie), so the game was bound to have some good scares along with it. I bit the bullet and opted to see what *DUSK* had to offer.

Despite its flaws, *DUSK* is a solid game that can be a lot of fun when it is best. The gunplay feels great: the weapons carry a weight to them and they all feel good to shoot; ammo is sparse for some weapons but not punishingly so and the dual-wielding mechanics are always satisfying. Seeing the little shotgun-twirling reload animation is a unique feature. Unfortunately, *DUSK* suffers from some arsenal bloating. All in all, there are about a dozen weapons, of which you will have access to eight or nine at a time. A lot of weapons are redundant, especially the riveter and mortar; the latter is much more awkward to use, while the former has incredibly sparse ammo but feels great in comparison. Condensing them into one could remove some unnecessary extra weaponry that slows the player down from trying to pick the weapon they had in mind.

ULTRAKILL, by comparison, only has five weapons, but gives each of them separate variations to choose from. By adding a second axis of customization, *ULTRAKILL* limits the amount of scrolling players have to do while trying to select their ideal weapon, whereas in *DUSK* I find myself running around trying to select the shotguns for a few seconds during combat.

The game’s weakest aspect are easily its boss fights. They are, to put it in a word, bad. The Duke Brothers are two big guys that occasionally fire homing projectiles at you. The Experiments run around and will sometimes stand still to shoot a series of projectiles. None of the designs are inspired, either visually or mechanically, and all of them thus far have been upsettingly easy. The hardest boss I have fought so far, Big John, would theoretically be a challenge, but his arena is a massive, open space. His gun has so much spread, and he moves so slowly that you just need to stand far away and snipe him to death. Not what I would call engaging gameplay.

The first episode suffers from a lot of problems in particular. The environments feel repetitive, the enemies mostly feel like unchallenging bullet sponges, and the encounters are largely easy. I was starting to worry a little about the game’s quality, and there are certainly concerns to be had, but so far the second episode has really ramped it up. Encounters are difficult! Nothing too absurd yet (I still have a couple levels to go), but they require some thought. Enemies are more challenging, but do not always feel like they are just tanking every bullet like a champ, which makes the basic pistol actually viable in a lot of scenarios.

The level designs are also really cool; the military base setting has a lot of interesting variety, compared to doing four farmhouse levels in a row. The boss fights are still disappointing, regrettably, but the game does have some time to turn that around. It also added probably the best powerup in the game, a SUPERHOT-style “time only moves when you do” ability that feels really cool but that I have only seen twice; I am glad they are not overdoing it, but I feel a little bit led on.

By far the game’s best moments are the atmospheric ones. Szymanski’s background in short horror comes through here, even though the gameplay is still a little rough around the edges. There were a few moments where I have been actively creeped out, but I would not call it actively scary.

There is a lot to like about *DUSK* at the end of the day. It is not a perfect game, but I would be lying if I said it was not also very fun. Blasting cultists is always cathartic and doing it in 180p is not so bad either. Szymanski’s new FPS project, *Gloomwood*, is out in early access, and while I have not played it, I am hoping he has taken a few lessons from his first foray into the genre. I am only expecting the game to improve as I play more. I would recommend it if it looks like it might be for you; you will definitely get your money’s worth. That said, *ULTRAKILL* does everything this game does, and for the most part does it better. *DUSK* is not trying to reinvent the wheel—it is a tribute more than anything. I do not want to push for *ULTRAKILL* too hard, but it is really good.

Game over, gamers. Scarier games coming soon.

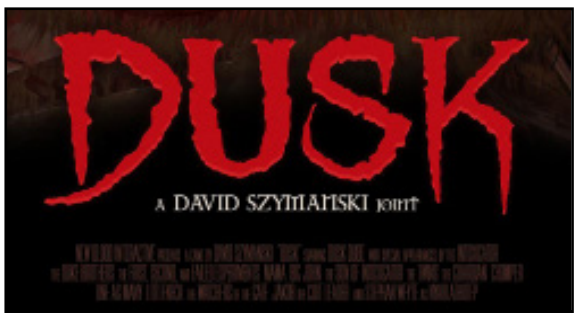


PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

PHOTO COURTESY OF GOOGLE IMAGES

***DUSK* is a retro first-person shooter horro game where players fight cultists.**

No argument can justify Hamas's strikes against Israeli civilians

by Taylor Kaufman '26
OPINION CONTRIBUTOR

This article contains graphic descriptions of violence

What could justify the actions committed on Oct. 7, 2023 in Israel? Without any context for the Israel-Palestine conflict and only seeing the videos Hamas published all over the internet, what would it take to justify the following actions?

These actions included the public demonstration of kidnapping and torturing children, intentional ambushes targeting elderly communities, women hogtied and punched in the face, evidence of mass rape and dead bodies jumped on by children, while onlookers laughed and shot their guns in the air. Hamas paraded the heads of innocent Israelis down the streets as if they were trophies and posted videos of children tortured and killed in front of their mothers.

Furthermore, reports claim that Hamas brutalized and murdered a grandmother just to log into her phone and post pictures of her mutilated body where her friends and family would see it. And, infamously, they murdered hundreds of young people attending a music festival who were trapped by a barrier of armed terrorists in an unprecedented ambush. All of this was recorded and posted across all forms of media.

Seven hundred people died in one day; almost exclusively

PHOTO COURTESY OF BBC

The borders between Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip have been subject to controversy since Israel's founding.

civilians. What could ever warrant this?

I ask from a place of genuine curiosity because communities all across the world are actively glorifying these actions and blaming Israel for their occurence.

I cannot fathom how the actions of Hamas remotely resemble the narrative of resistance. Do these videos not demonstrate a motivation that is entirely contrary to freedom fighting? Military targets were not the objective of this mission. Destabilizing the Israeli government, military or economy was not the goal. Reclaiming land was not the goal. If the mass publishing of these videos means anything at all, it is that the goal of this operation is to record and publish death, terror and trauma.

Kidnapping grandparents from retirement homes is not resistance. Allowing young Palestinian children to take part in the torture and humiliation of captured Israeli children is not resistance. Mass rape will never be a form of resisting oppression. These actions illustrate the true motivations behind the actions of Oct. 7: a hatred of Jews.

Jews are not unaccustomed to this subjugation; they have been publicly massacred and the victims of genocide time and time again and the narrative repeatedly blames the Jews. Mistakes are only mistakes if they are not lessons. International indifference towards genocidal acts against the Jewish people is a trend that is a recurring mistake. Instead, it must be a lesson.

What would you do if it was your sister, your cousin, your community or your child in these videos? Would you hide in terror, or fight in rage? Would you sympathize with terrorists' oppression? What would you do if it was you?

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

Anti-Israel protests have criticized Israel's founding as evidence of colonialism and depict Israel as an illegitimate state.

Barbie, pretty but nothing else

by Sarafina Madden '26
STAFF WRITER

This summer, throngs of women flocked to theaters nationwide to watch the new Barbie movie. The movie was a total hit, sending every social media platform into a tizzy, catalyzing the iconic "girlhood" tik tok trend and a nationwide reclamation of the color pink. Arriving at my nearest AMC theater in my pink sweats, I was excited to see the movie for myself.

Set in candy-coated Barbie Land, Barbie was very pretty with gorgeous animation, but in every other respect, the movie fell flat. Its central flaw was its total lack of character development. The movie centers on a completely unmotivated conflict between a mother and her daughter and their respective conflicts with Barbie herself. The mother and daughter characters were incredibly forgettable and could have been interchanged with any other mother or daughter character. The movie made little effort to investigate their particular struggles, quirks and interests, leaving the audience with no reason investment in their specific narrative. The mother seems to be going through a generic mid-life crisis, making her decisions devoid of specific incentives and motivations. Maybe this was deliberate and she was meant to serve as a "universal" mother that all viewers could relate to, but, to me, it just reflected weak character development and lack of originality in the depiction of motherhood. Without unique, well-developed, dimensional characters, the conflicts of the movie were unmotivated, incoherent and uncompelling.

Instead of characters driving the plot, the plot imposed itself on the characters, as they served as mouthpieces for the movie's political message. The climactic scene where America Ferrera, cast as the mother character, gives her speech about the strugles of womanhood felt incredibly heavy-handed, with little nuance or subtlety. Rather than conveying its feminist message organically through characters' relationships, the movie plopped in a three minute cliché-filled lecture on feminism. Because of the scene's optics, it was clear we were supposed to care, but, in reality, it was preachy, boring and most importantly, devoid of any human emotion that would make the message something to which viewers could relate.

There was nothing artful or crafty about the movie's approach to feminism. With no nod to any of the true feminist scholars who have devoted their lives to outlining the issues of misogyny and female oppression, the movie bulldozes over all of the female scholarship that has actually aided in the feminist movement. Instead it reduced the field of feminist thought to, "smash the patriarchy!". Moreover, depicting every male character as either a fool or villain is only counterproductive and antagonistic to progressive feminist agendas. Maybe this was an effort to depict some men's misogynistic view of women, but, to me, it reflected the writers' laziness and failure to investigate the complexities of gender divides and relationships.

The final scene of the movie, where Barbie watches the montage of images centered on human connection also seemed incompatible with the other themes of the movie. This scene thematizes Barbie's yearning for human connection rather than the feminist focus that had driven the entire rest of the movie. It was out of place and failed to deliver any resolution on the movie's central ideas. Perhaps the theme of human connection was the more worthwhile and natural topic for the movie to explore, rather than the self-conscious feminist message that awkwardly wedged itself into every scene of the movie.

I commend the movie for, at the very least, encouraging dialogue and I urge you to interrogate the movie's message, engage with its themes and consider whether it reflects the true tenets of feminism.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MOVIE DATABASE

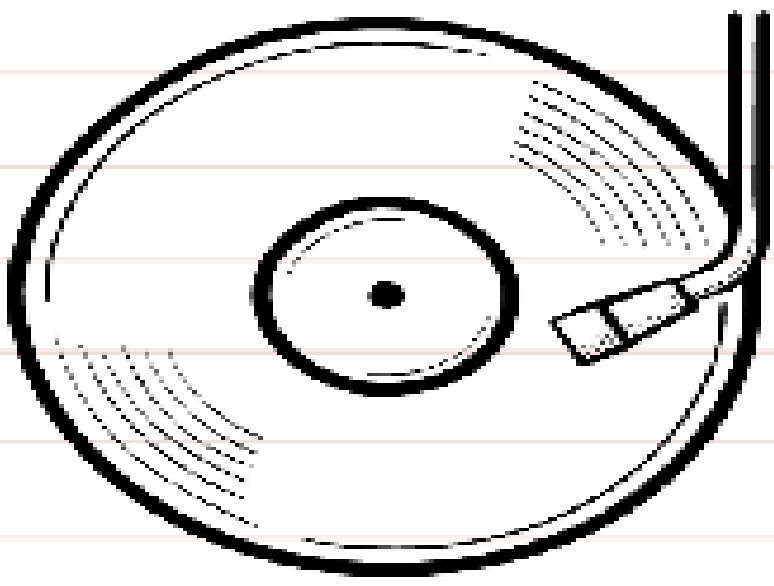
Although *Barbie*'s Summer 2023 release was an initial hit, critics have pointed out flaws in plotline and character development.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PEOPLE MAGAZINE

***Barbie* has brought together some of Hollywood's most talented actors, including Ryan Gosling, Greta Gerwig and Margot Robbie.**

ALBUMS TO LOOK OUT FOR FOR THE REST OF 2023

1. Sampha - "LAHAI" (Oct. 20)
2. Taylor Swift - "1989 (Taylor's Version)" (Oct. 27)
3. Pinkpantheress - "Heaven Knows" (Nov. 10)
4. Danny Brown - "Quaranta" (Nov. 17)
5. Nicki Minaj - "Pink Friday 2" (Nov. 17)
6. Bleachers - TBD (2023)
7. Busta Rhymes - TBD (2023)
8. Miguel - "Viscera" (2023)
9. The Kid Laroi - "The First Time" (2023)
10. Kevin Abstract - "Blanket" (Nov. 3)
11. DJ Shadow - "Action Adventure" (Oct. 27)
12. King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard - "The Silver Cord" (Oct. 27)
13. The Rolling Stones - "Hackney Diamonds" (Oct. 20)
14. Blink-182 - "One More Time..." (Oct. 20)



Taylor Swift dominates both music and cinema

by Madelaine Tolliver '26
A&E STAFF WRITER

There is no denying the impact Taylor Swift has had on 2023. From her multimillion-dollar grossing tour to hijacking the beginning of the NFL's football season, she now has her sights set on the silver screen. This past week, Taylor Swift has drawn thousands of fans to theaters to see her newest film, a nearly three hour professionally shot showcase of her sold out SoFi stadium stop on the Eras Tour. The film's opening weekend raked in a whopping 95 million dollars in domestic ticket sales.

Directed by Sam Wrench, who is no stranger to concert films, having shot concerts featuring artists such as Billie Eilish and BTS, *Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour* strives to be as close to Swift's live concert experience as possible. Having attended both the live concert and the filmed concert, I can confirm that Swift and Wrench do so flawlessly, earning a 100% score on Rotten Tomatoes. The film starts off immediately by immersing the audience into SoFi stadium as Swift begins the show in her *Lover* album era with her song "Miss Americana and the Heartbreak Prince." Following her first group of songs, Taylor Swift herself rises up on a platform and greets the audience by saying "Oh, hi!," which was met by ear-shattering cheers from both the filmed audience and the audience of movie-theater goers.

The theater was full of viewers in head-to-toe Taylor Swift merchandise, both purchased from the singer's store and homemade, and clad with AMC/*Eras Tour* popcorn buckets, even at a 10 p.m. showing. For many, this is the closest to one of Swift's shows they are able to get, as fans have had to fight infamous battles with Ticketmaster, high ticket prices and shows being sold out in mere minutes to get tickets. Swift's *Eras Tour* in particular drew in many who wanted to buy tickets, as this show spans all 17 years of Swift's music career, including music from all ten of her studio albums. While it includes all her hit songs, such as "Blank Space," "You Belong With Me," and "Karma," the setlist also contains some of her more B-side tracks like "illicit affairs" and "tolerate it."

Though Swift is the clear focus of the film, she also makes sure to give the attention deserved by her talented crew of backing vocalists, dancers and band—many of whom have been touring with her since her *Fearless* days. Her concert excels in every aspect, from the performers to the costumes to the sets, keeping the audience captivated through her hours-long set. Swift even performs a ten-minute-long song with a name that is equally long; "All Too Well (10 Minute Version) (Taylor's Version) (From The Vault)." Throughout the show, Swift switches between singing, dancing, playing guitar and playing piano, leaving her talent undeniable to any audience member. Taylor Swift ends the show by asking the audience if they can spare the time for one last song, "Karma," which includes a very theatrical ending with bows and fireworks.

Though only in its first week, the *Eras Tour* concert film has already become the highest grossing concert film in the United States. Beyonce, who also recently wrapped up a massively successful summer tour, will be releasing a conceptually similar film following her *Renaissance Tour*, further setting the precedent for artists to make their concerts more widely accessible.

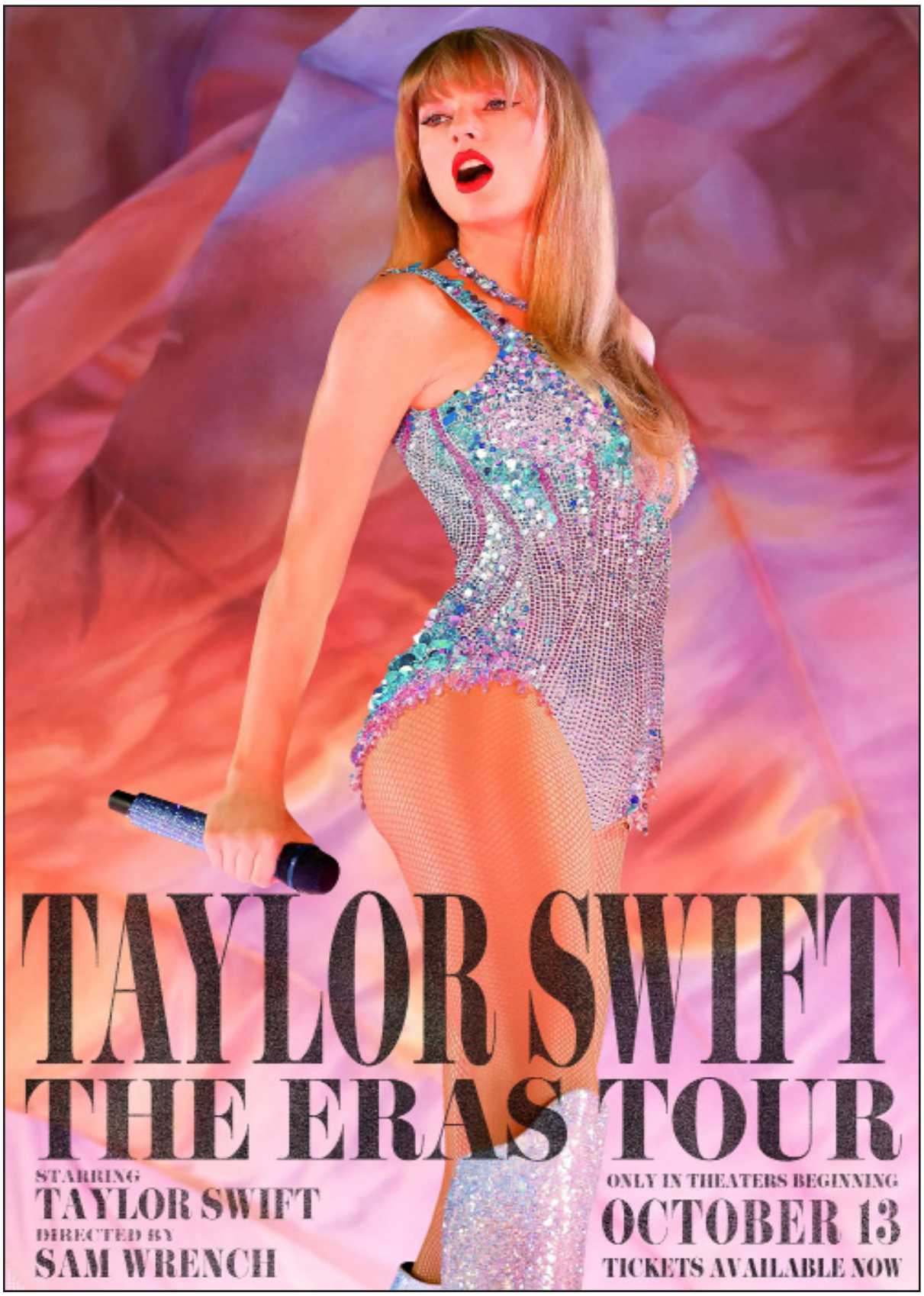


PHOTO COURTESY OF IMDB

Taylor Swift's tour-based film is the highest-grossing concert-film of all time.

Why you should watch the Rugby World Cup

by Owen Lewis '24
SPORTS EDITOR

ARTWORK COURTESY OF REUTERS/SARAH MEYSSONNIER

South Africa celebrates after beating host nation France by one point.

If you are reading this, I am guessing you do not have much familiarity with rugby besides the knowledge that Hamilton has men's and women's club teams. I do not blame you. While rugby is a popular global sport, the United States is just 18th in the world rankings and has never been a superpower in the game.

That shouldn't stop us from paying attention to world rugby, though. In fact, the Rugby World Cup is taking place right now, and it has been an excellent tournament. The Cup happens just once every four years, like the soccer World Cup and the Olympics, so every match feels exponentially more important than the average contest.

I'll admit that I have a personal connection to rugby. I lived in New Zealand, who have been the best team in the world for most of the last 20 years (though they are not quite at the peak of their powers right now), for five years when I was in elementary school. I have some early memories of watching New Zealand play South Africa on my living room sofa with my dad. I would have been five or six, and when my dad said that we had scored a "try"—rugby's oddly-named equivalent of a touchdown, though it is worth five points rather than six—I thought he meant we had made an attempt at something. Clueless as I was, I cried when South Africa narrowly won the match. I didn't know it at the time, but the South Africa-New Zealand matchup is a storied rivalry. They have played 105 times dating back to 1921, with New Zealand winning 62 times. They could meet for the 106th occasion in the World Cup final on Oct. 28.

I'm not writing this article out of loyalty to New Zealand, though. I'm writing this because more emotions have been on display in the rugby matches I've watched over the past few days than in any other sport I've seen recently. The quarterfinals were this past week, and all four games were decided by ridiculously small margins. New Zealand edged out Ireland 28-24, Argentina beat Wales 28-19 (don't let the scoreline fool you—Wales came within inches of a try that would have put them ahead but Louis Rees-Zammit was tackled out of bounds milliseconds before he could complete the score), England got the best of Fiji 30-24 and South Africa squeaked past host nation France in a scarcely believable scoreline of 29-28.

In rugby, tries are marked not merely by passing the goal line, the way they are in American football, but by touching the ball to the ground after you do so. That specific rule decided the New Zealand-Ireland battle: with just eight minutes left, the Irish heaved across the goal line, seemingly scoring a try that would put them in the lead, but Jordie Barrett of New Zealand somehow got underneath the ball and held it up, preventing the try by what was likely a few inches. Ireland never got another chance.

That one play crushed Ireland's best chance for a World Cup title to date. Before the loss to New Zealand on Oct. 14, they had won 17 straight matches and were nearing the record winning streak in this era. Though they had never made it past the quarterfinals of a World Cup, they were ranked #1 in the world. This was supposed to be their moment.

Now, there is no consolation. Johnny Sexton, the Irish captain, is retiring. Much of Ireland's team is in their mid-to-late 30s. Their squad will look entirely different by the next World Cup in 2027. Similarly, France's one-point loss to South Africa comes with no silver linings—France was the host nation, playing with home crowd support, and was aiming for their first World Cup title while South Africa have won three already. The fact that the game was close ceased to matter after the final whistle signaled South Africa's victory. Like Ireland, France will have to wait until 2027 to correct this loss.

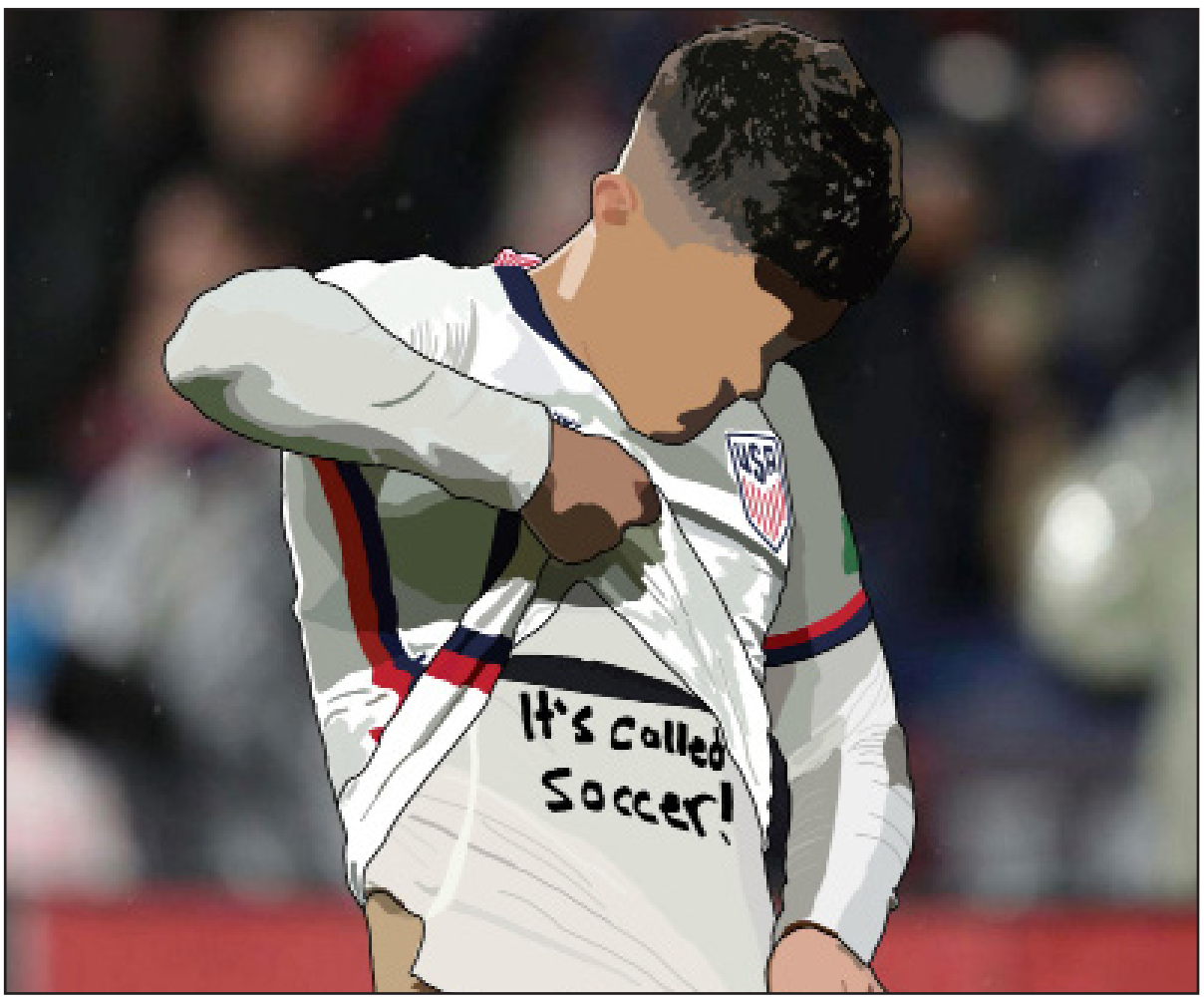
If the emotional stakes are not enough to convince you to tune into the upcoming semifinals, let me posit that aesthetically, rugby is superior in every way to American football. There are no "downs," which means no incessant stopping of play and resetting every five seconds. Not only is the action much more free-flowing this way, but game actually lasts the amount of time that the clock indicates it will. (Rugby matches are two 40-minute halves). Penalty kicks can be positioned anywhere on the length or width of the field, unlike every field goal being straight down the middle in football, which means that kickers have to demonstrate an understanding of angles as well as just brute power. A rugby team has more players on the field at once than a football team (15 to 11), but they are more spread out, allowing for more exciting moments that involve a player breaking into open grass and running freely. And while touchdowns in football hardly ever involve anyone outside the quarterback, running back, tight end, and wide receiver, there are frequently tries in rugby in which every single player on the team touches the ball.

On Oct. 20, New Zealand will play Argentina in one semifinal; the following day, South Africa will clash with England for the other final spot. If New Zealand and South Africa meet in the final as expected, the winner will be the first team to win four Rugby World Cups (since its inception in 1987, New Zealand and South Africa have won three each, Australia has won two and England has won one). If there is an upset, it will be thrilling for the fans and good for the sport to have more unpredictability at the top of the game.

Whatever happens, I know I'm going to see elation and devastation when I watch the semifinals later this week. Everybody wants to win desperately; only one team can. I can't think of a better way to spend my time than watching every second of it. Be sure to tune in with me.

MLS: where it's been, where it's going

by Patrick Cleary '24
SPORTS CONTRIBUTOR



ARTWORK COURTESY OF PATRICK CLEARY

Major League Soccer is lagging behind leagues outside the United States. Why?

Next week, the Major League Soccer (MLS) Cup Playoffs will commence with 16 teams contending for the league title. Two names absent from the marquee will be Argentine Lionel Messi and his club Inter Miami. Messi made his debut for the club in July and despite a Leagues Cup victory, was unable to lift Miami high enough in the standings after being sidelined with an injury through the end of the season.

Messi's legacy is already secured with his stint in the MLS a glorified retirement. That being said, his arrival was supposed to be something of a watershed moment for American soccer. As more players head to leagues abroad and with the 2026 World Cup just around the corner it raises this question: where is American soccer right now and where is it going?

First off, how does American soccer differ from leagues abroad? Unlike leagues in Europe where clubs operate independently, the MLS uses a franchise system similar to other American leagues. Under this system, the league operates a single entity. Owners are shareholders of the league as a whole, enabling them to make rules to restrict spending and free agency. Teams operate with a strict salary cap, cannot be relegated and hold the right to trade players without their consent. This is why the MLS, despite playing in a wealthy country, still sits miles behind leagues abroad. Teams can't spend hundreds of millions on wages and transfer fees in the same way superclubs in Europe or Saudi Arabia can. Why is the MLS like this?

Because American soccer failed. Over and over again for decades. Leagues were founded, failed to attract audiences drawn to other sports, and collapsed. The closest contender was the North American Soccer League. In 1975, the NASL's New York Cosmos signed 35 year old sporting icon Pele to the largest contract in American sports. Other post-prime superstars such as Johan Cruyff, Franz Beckenbauer and Bobby Moore later joined the league. Pele played three seasons before hanging up his boots for a final time. Why didn't the NASL stick around?

Because a league can't survive off a single player. In matches without the big stars, attendance cratered. The NASL was a circus with Pele as its main attraction. When he left, the fans followed, and the league folded in March 1985. This is why the MLS is the way it is. Its mission from Day One has been to keep costs down. When it began in 1993 as part of the US's bid for the 1994 World Cup, the league was barely professional, played on repurposed NFL and College football fields. The league lost money for years. In 2007, David Beckham signed with the LA Galaxy on the condition that he could buy into the league. Beckham now owns Inter Miami with Messi set to take a share of ownership upon his retirement. Beckham brought his global status and with lower player costs, the league survived and grew from 10 teams in 1996 to 30 in 2025. It's a great story but that focus on cost cutting hasn't been without consequences.

Teams have to compromise. The MLS saves money by flying teams commercially rather than on private planes. This results in less rest time for players as they have to contend with regular flight schedules and connecting flights. Additionally, games are often played on turf. Turf is cheaper to maintain and can easily be removed, enabling arenas to host concerts and other events. However, it also raises the risk of non-contact injuries due to the lack of grip when planting the foot, especially when performing high-speed movements. Teams also have smaller roster sizes. The English Premier League allows teams 25 players and then an unlimited number of under 21 players. The MLS has a hard cap of 30. Again, this saves costs by limiting payroll but it comes at the cost of wear and tear on player health. The MLS plays a 34 game season with international matches and cup games interspersed throughout followed by a traditional North American playoff format. More matches means more money but its another anchor weighing down the quality of the league. Part of the reason Inter Miami is absent from the playoffs is due to a hamstring injury Messi sustained in a game against Toronto FC shortly after returning from international duties.

Again, the MLS is run by its owners, so any changes have to go through them instead of an independent body as is done in other leagues. As such, changes that would threaten their bottom line have no chance to become reality. Promotion/relegation would boost the excitement of late season matches but no owner is going to vote to devalue their asset after one bad year. Having teams pay transfer fees directly for players would make the MLS a real player for international talent, but it too would lose the owners money. American soccer can't continue to have this survivalist complex. If the MLS is going to succeed it can't be afraid to fail.